

Hello! I'm Cal.

Cal Thompson (they/them), LA 🌱

- VP of End to End Design, Headspace
- Artist, designer, design leader, mindfulness teacher.
- General all around optimist.
- Queer person. Designer for a more equitable world.

- BA, Dartmouth College
- Graduate studies at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Print/Media & University of Texas at Austin in Architecture
- Certificate, Interaction Design and Social Entrepreneurship at Austin Center for Design
- Licensed Avatar Course teacher since 2006

- Hi folks! I'm Cal. My pronouns are they/them. I'm non-binary. And I lead the design team at Headspace, which is a mindfulness and mental health app.
- Outside of work, I'm an artist and have been a mindfulness teacher since 2006.
- I'm also an outraged optimist. I notice a lot of design flaws in society and aim to mend them.

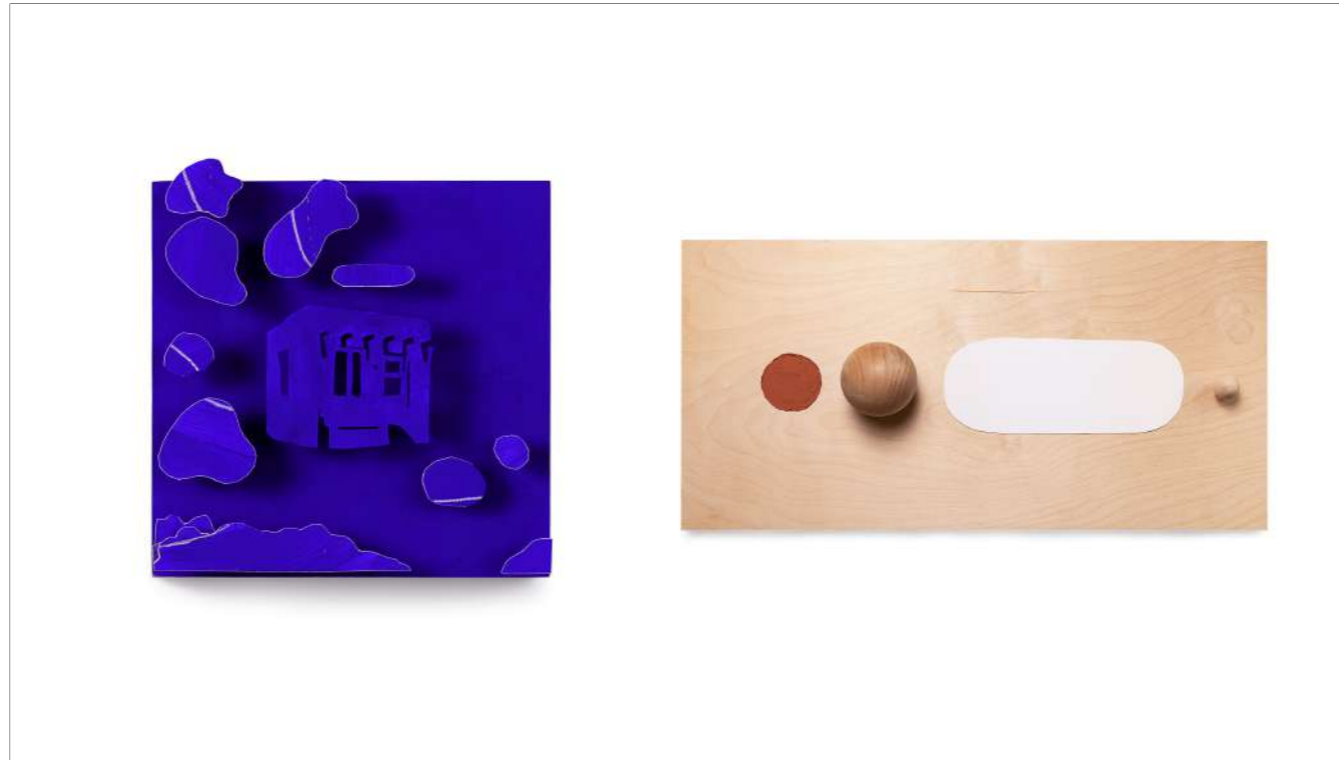


- Here's my amazing team at Headspace.
- I brought them with me as a good luck charm :)

**My life goal is to help people to
increase their
'present moment awareness,'
be kinder, and create
a just and thriving world.**

That can be done through kindness, art,
more nature, great teachers, mindfulness,
and of course, well designed digital
products and services.

- So a little about me: My life goal is...



- I grew up painting and went to art school before I went to design school so I still make a lot of art outside of work. It's what brings me the most joy. (Per Sam's question!). I have a qr code at the end if you want to see more of my work.



- For 5.5 years I worked at Fjord, in their Austin Texas and then San Francisco studios. Fjord is a global service design consultancy now owned by Accenture- now called Accenture Song (they have a Tokyo office that they opened in 2019!). I got the honor of working for NTT Docomo on some innovation projects in 2017 and 2018 while at Fjord, so I got to work some in Japan doing in-home research and concepting.
- I had to include this photo on the top right because one day my team (12 people) all dressed up as me (I usually wear hats and bandannas but didn't bring any hats with me to Tokyo since it's too far to travel).



- But I left Fjord in 2019, right before pandemic, to work at my dream job where I got to combine all the design work I've done with my love for mindfulness from outside of work, and a lot of art in work through our in-house illustration, animation, film, and sound composing teams.
- Here's the courtyard at our Headspace Santa Monica headquarters.



- At Headspace, we really do get to meditate together.
- This is Dora Kamau, one of our amazing teachers in the Headspace app. She has a great course on Breakups if anyone has just gone through one...she also leads monthly sound baths and guided meditations at the office.



- Since today is the third day of Pride month and I'm gay, I wanted to share our Pride campaign from the LA Pride parade last year.
- Orange is the color of healing in the Pride flag that Gilbert Baker designed, it's also Headspace's brand color, so we made silk orange flags and wore shirts saying "love your femme, butch, young, queer, fluid, mind"

9

Hello, from Headspace



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- So now a tiny bit about Headspace to make my talk make more sense....

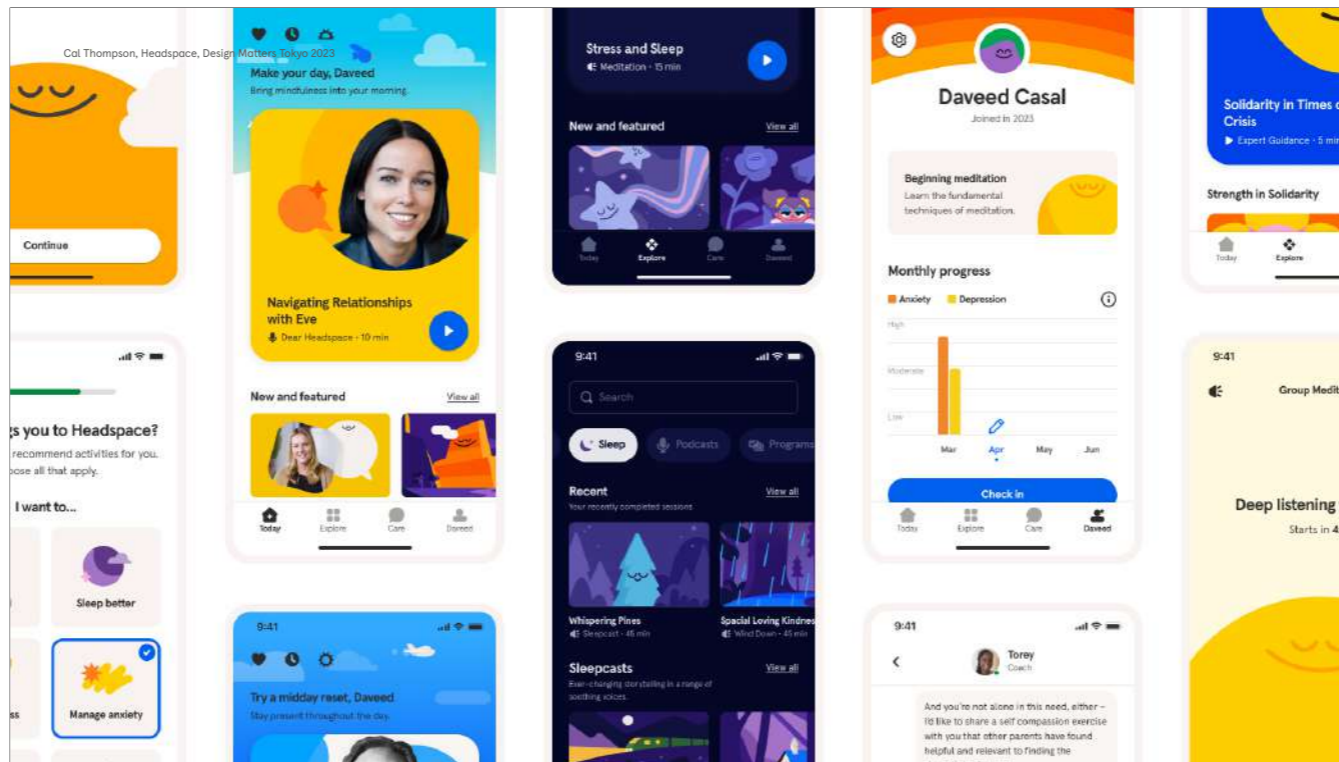
We are working towards...

**A world where
everyone is kind
to their mind**





- In 2012 Rich and Andy started a Science team at our company to ensure we were testing our mindfulness guidance to see if it was producing results. (It does, yay!) And as the world's needs have grown for more mental health and wellbeing support, we have started learning from some of the ancestors in the digital health space, like Lantern.ai, which was the first app to make digital guided behavior change interventions. Many of the Lantern employees have worked at Headspace, and one, Lauren Lee, runs our Science team.



- My design team works alongside her and her behavioral science and clinical product teams to make— digital experiences that produce actual human health results.
- We are helping people with stress, anxiety, sleep, and next year, depression.
- I bring all of this up because I'm going to talk about how digital products produce change in people and how as a designer, you can be responsible for better outcomes for people.



Service Design for Mindfulness (Mairidofurunesu)

How to **design** healthy behaviors for humans,
to increase their happiness and awareness



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- Ok, so let's get into how designers can be wayyyyyy more than feature iterators— they can be people who shape systems to be fundamentally better for people and the planet.

What is mindfulness?



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- So let's start with a shared understanding of what mindfulness is (vs. meditation).
- Since zen Buddhism was founded in Japan- many of you probably know this already, but I felt this was a nice description so wanted to share it.

it's a quality we carry

“If meditation is the training ground where we familiarize ourselves with the here and now for a limited period of time, mindfulness is the quality of being present that we carry throughout the day, available to us – when we remember to be aware – as life unfolds, fully engaged with whatever we’re doing at the moment, free from distraction or judgment.”



“...Mindfulness is not a contrived or temporary state of mind that has to be created or maintained; **it is a way of living** – a way of stepping back in the moment and resting the mind in its natural state, free from the surrounding chaos or whatever circumstances might be proving stressful, upsetting, or overwhelming.”

-Andy Puddicombe, co-founder of Headspace



- And being more mindful, is the key to being a much better designer.
- (And feeling less stressed out in your life as a bonus) :)

Why do we need more mindful services and experiences?

With a world in constant change and some upheaval, we need mindfully designed services even more.

We can help people navigate their lives and improve our planet.

So, how can we contribute?



headspace

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- Japan as a culture actually already has many many many in person mindful services and experiences. But weaving that level of care, thoughtfulness, service, and mindfulness into the sequencing, flow, steps, and UI of digital products is the next frontier for all of us as designers.
- Previously, we have only seen that to be “simplicity” or “minimalism” (which is similar to what Kyo was exploring in his talk), but actually the type of mindful design I’m encouraging us to weave into our work is about questioning what the product or service is doing to and for people and the planet.

“The practice of UX is under attack...”
-Cal Thompson
“...From its own practitioners”
-Lauren Serota



- So, I have been saying this a lot lately and my friend and design research mentor, Lauren Serota, who is a real genius, said “it’s coming under attack from its own practitioners who have stopped doing in person research, and stopped letting themselves learn things that are new or surprising.”

**Practicing true UX and true service design,
starts with research and co-design with end
users & thoughtfully orchestrates/iterates
on the service based on that.**



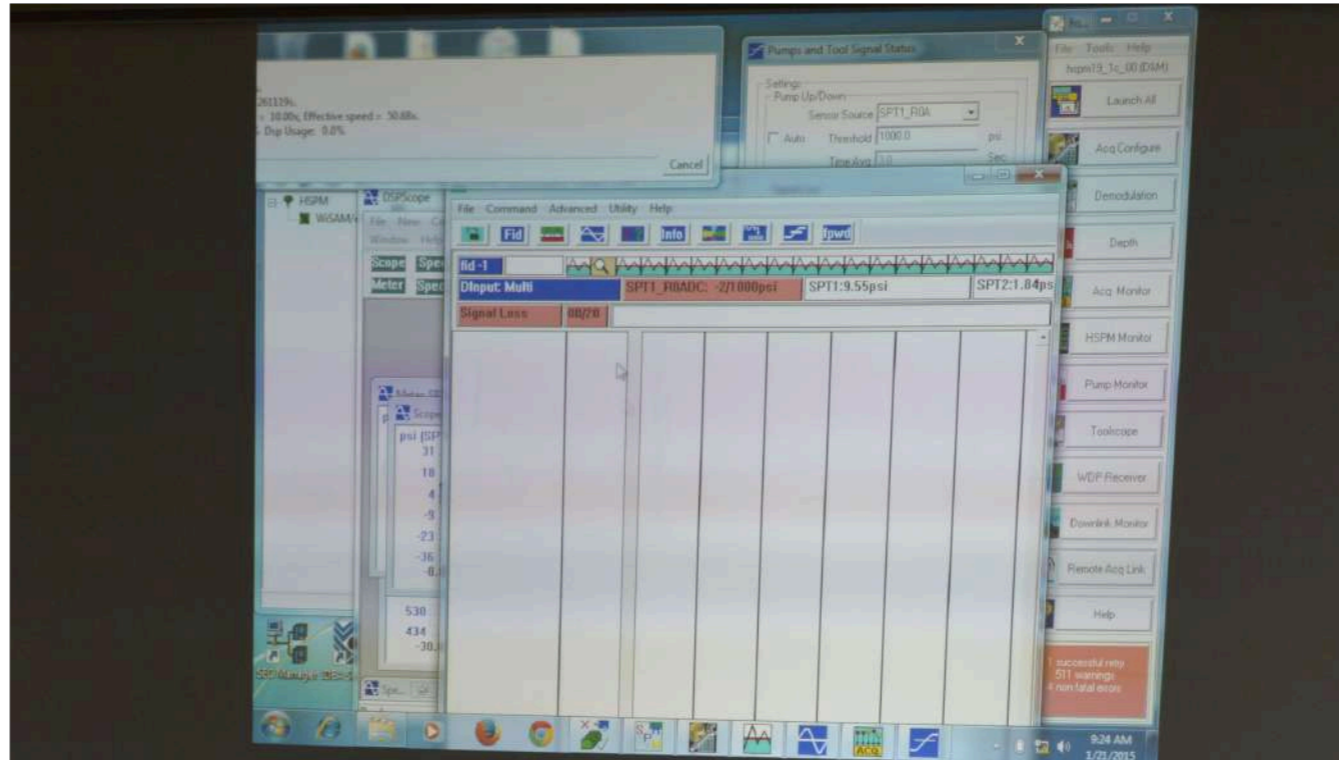
Let's discuss the history of UX, for context

UX, as a discipline, was formed to clarify the user experience and push developers to consider the user as an integral part of the system.

The first person with "UX" in their title was Don Norman, and he helped design products to be more usable to humans. UX was the layer of "usability" and "ease of use."

Developers used to build everything before UX designers came along.

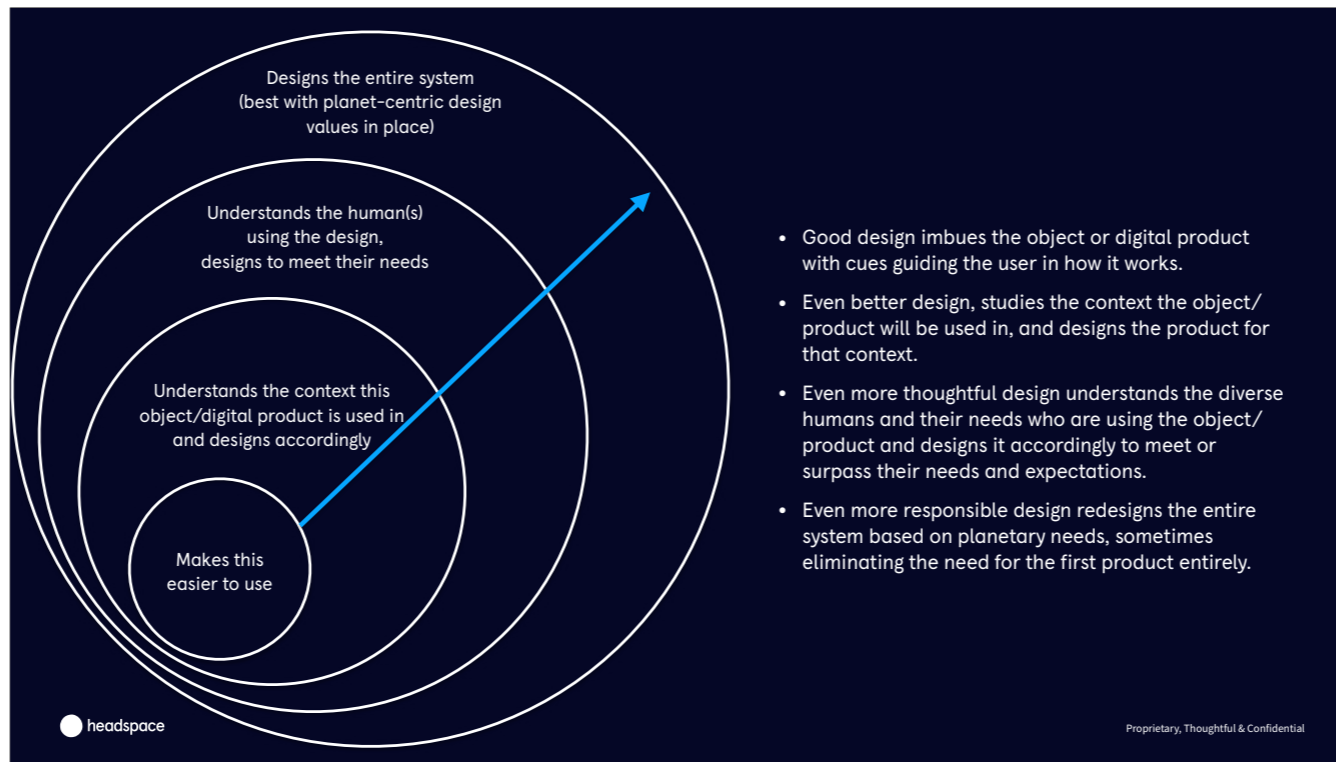
- You all have probably read Don Norman's "Design of Everyday Things" -



- This is the interface of a very visually dry and yet also simultaneously scary and weird oil drilling “logging” software that pumps out the data from oil wells. It was “designed” by developers in the 90s. The blue and red peaks are supposed to show you that the data is coming in consistently and is the data is missing, then you get the little magnifying class. But it doesn’t tell you why. AND the poor engineers had to just sit and stare at this data feed all day to see if anything was going wrong.
- So obviously this needed a lot of UX design help.
- The process my team went through with this one was fun, we observed these engineers in the field doing their work, using this software. Then we went back to our studio, synthesized that research, made wireframes to test and made these glorious user friendly and really cool good looking dashboards for them.



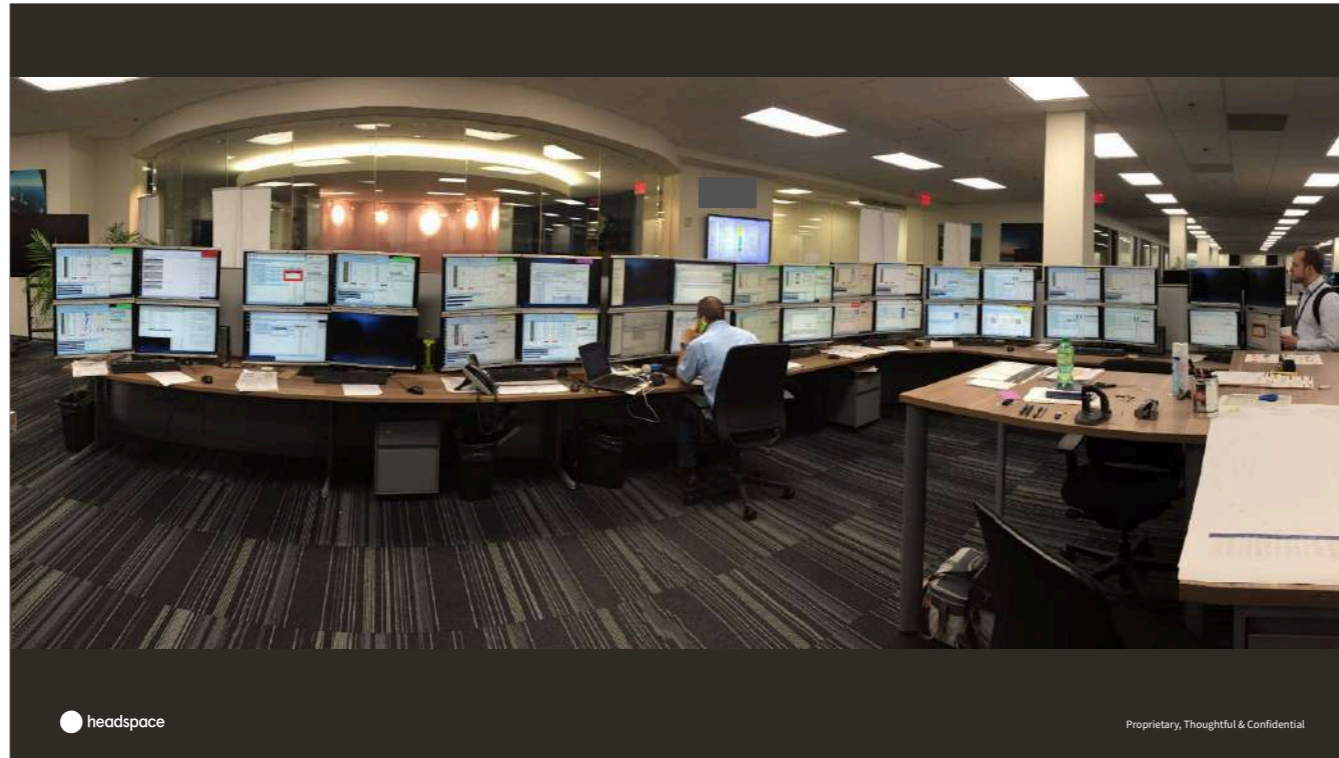
- So now let's get into how UX is currently being used (at least in the US at big companies—) it's turning into just making one small feature easier to use. Designer friends of mine who work at google, meta, LinkedIn, salesforce, etc. are tasked with just iterating on single features and optimizing existing flows to improve metrics.
- But this isn't a good use of designers. A good use is our systems thinking ability.



- Good design imbues the object or digital product with cues guiding the user in how it works.
- Even better design, studies the context the object/product will be used in, and designs the product for that context.
- Even more thoughtful design understands the diverse humans and their needs who are using the object/product and designs it accordingly to meet or surpass their needs and expectations.
- Even more responsible design redesigns the entire system based on planetary needs, sometimes eliminating the need for the first product entirely.



- These are the job titles you usually see for those levels of responsibility and design.



- Here's a good example of why studying the context of the item, and the person using it, and the system around them, is vital to designing better experiences.
- This is a Remote Monitoring Drilling Engineer. My colleague and I did research with him in the field, at the call center office where he worked in Houston, Texas.
- Each of these monitors represents a different oil well somewhere in the world.— so it's about 32, that he needs to monitor all at once.
- He is a very experienced engineer who has been promoted into this role. His job is to monitor the screens and also take questions over the phone from each lower-level junior engineers who is stationed at one of those wells.
- He works 2 weeks on, 2 weeks off, and works 12 hours shifts rolling his roly chair up and down this long desk looking at these screens. That work schedule means he does get tired at work, but if he gets too sleepy, he could miss an accident happening on one of these wells around our planet.
- When an issue or mistake happens on those oil wells (mind you, a mistake means the possibility of an environmental disaster) a little red box shows up on the monitor. If you count you can see about 3 that have issues right now.
- While we were there, we could barely ask him questions about his work because he kept getting phone calls on his desk phone and personal cell phone from engineers asking for help with issues they were experiencing on rigs.
- If someone just showed us one screen from this software, we never ever would have known all of this. This meant that when we redesigned this, we not only thought of him and his wild life, we thought of all of this stressful context it would be used in, and how it needed to communicate not only issues to him, but also why they might be happening, and, to do it in one place, so this poor man didn't have to roll across the long long table all day long.



- This is a oil refinery I did research at for a different project. This was in Bay City, Texas, which is an island off the coast of Texas where a lot of drilling and oil refining takes place. These are crane operators, waiting to check in for work. They make \$1000 an hour (and this was in 2014 so probably more now!) And have to be tested often for drug use to maintain safety on the refinery. We were redesigning the check in software. Seeing it live in the field meant we realized the software was incorrectly reporting some people as not having been tested, thus blocking them and their teams from working— at \$1000 an hour that was expensive for everyone. Again, we never would have known how important it was, if we hadn't seen these men frustrated and lost that morning at 6 am in the inky dark outside of Houston, Texas. It made our work as designers immediately part of redesigning based on the whole system.

How to make your service more mindful:

Think through the user journey end to end.

Step yourself through customers' shoes in detail. It's ok to take it slow, think through, pause, ponder, and write down every single step. Spending time trying to forecast how a user might interact with the service you're designing and designing for that becomes an act of service from you to the customers/users– you are doing your best to shape the everyday into something unexpectedly delightful and elegant for them.



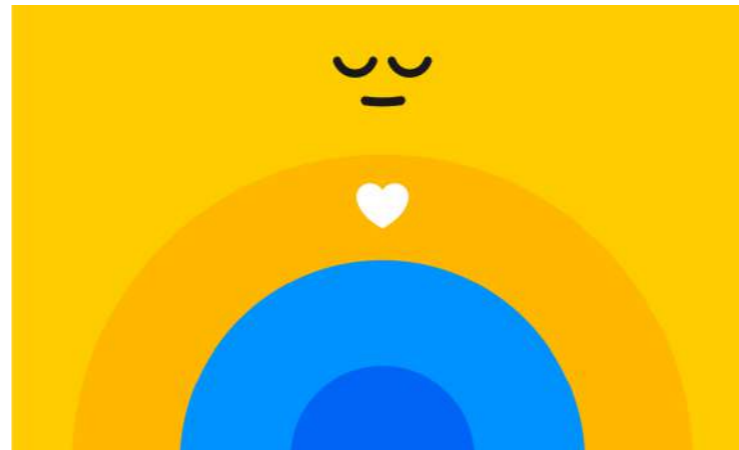
- Ok so here's how!

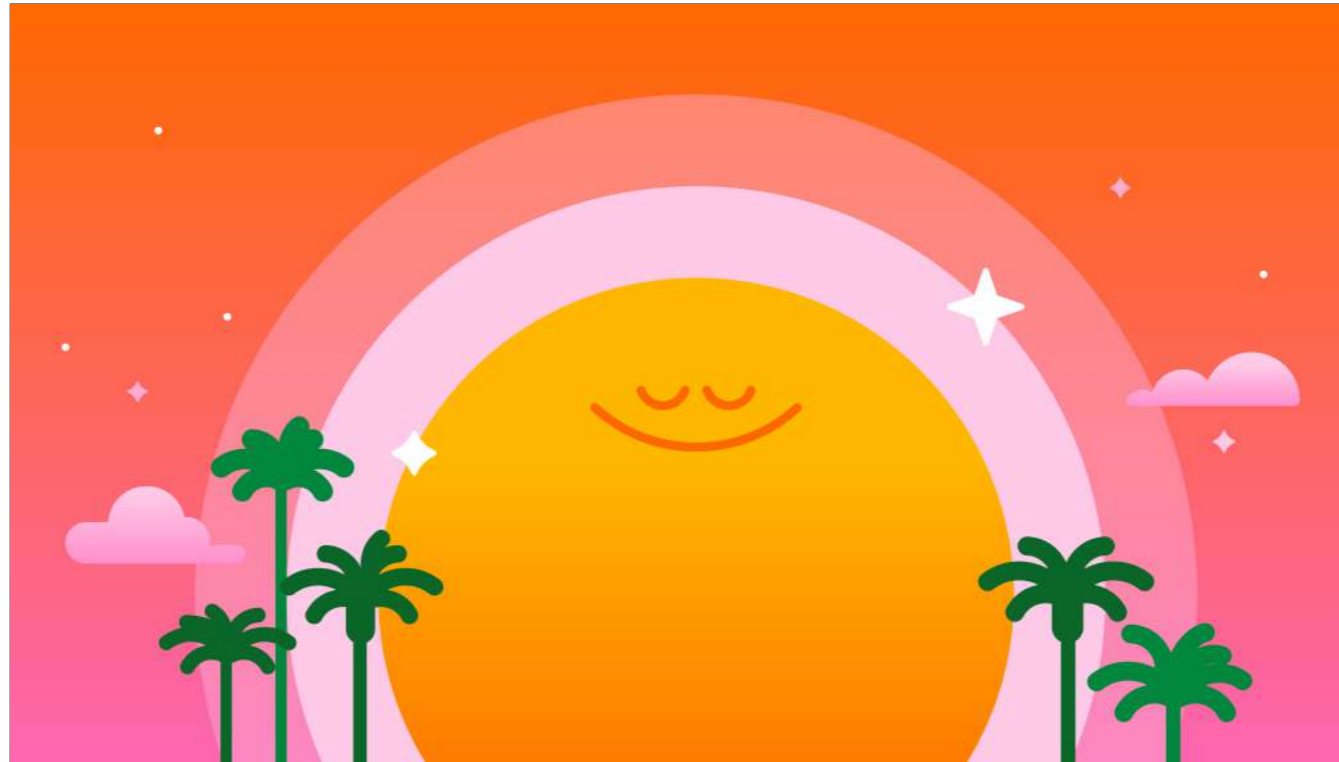
Think through the different touchpoints that would help across that journey, to support them.

This is your unique power as a designer— to think in a system and conduct supportive art.



**Stay present &
grounded as
you design.**





- How? I'll guide you!
- So get comfortable in your seat, you can keep your eyes open or closed, as you like.
- Taking a deep breathe in through your nose, hold it at the top, and gentle let it out through the mouth.
- Take another deep breath in, through your nose, and hold it for a moment, feel it in your lungs, and sloowly let it out through the mouth.
- Let your breathing return to normal. And if you can, place your attention on your feet. Feel the weight of your feet in your shoes, or on the floor. Feel the weight of your body in your chair. Maybe your hips or legs or back leaning on the chair.
- Take another deep breathe in, and hold, and slowly let it out.
- Let your breathing return to normal.
- Feel the space of the other designers around you in the room. Returning your attention to the breath, feel your lungs fill up with air as you breathe in, and then let it all out. Let any anxiety about the day that you have, any worries, any nervousness just fall out of you as you breathe out.
- Let's take one more deep breath in through the nose, hold and slowly let it all out.
- Returning your breathing to normal, notice the sounds around you, any sounds or movements.
- Just hearing them, no judgment, just noticing.
- And, one more deep breathe in, and hold, and let it slowly out.
- And as you breathe in you can return your attention to your body, any sensations in your body, feeling them, noticing them, and breathing.
- And when you are ready, you can gently, open your eyes.

Now that you have settled in,
questions to ask yourself:

**1. Who is my design for? When is it for
them? What is it helping them do? What
are they struggling with now?**



**2. Does this design respect the listener/
user? Is it engaging in a good and helpful
conversation with them?**



3. Does it give much more to the user than it takes? Or, hopefully, only gives? Information? A tool? A benefit? Something that makes them feel better?



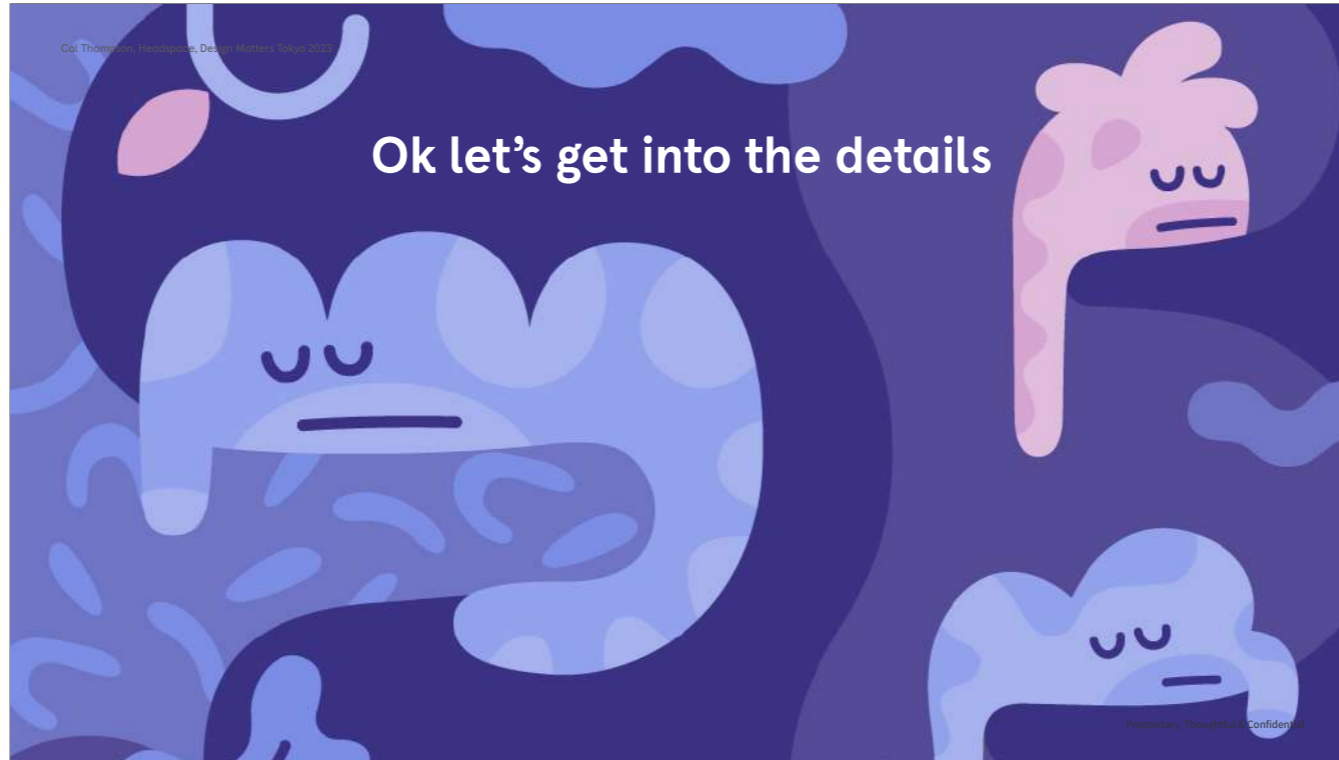
4. What does it help them accomplish over time?



5. What does this design, service, product do for the world long term?



Ok let's get into the details

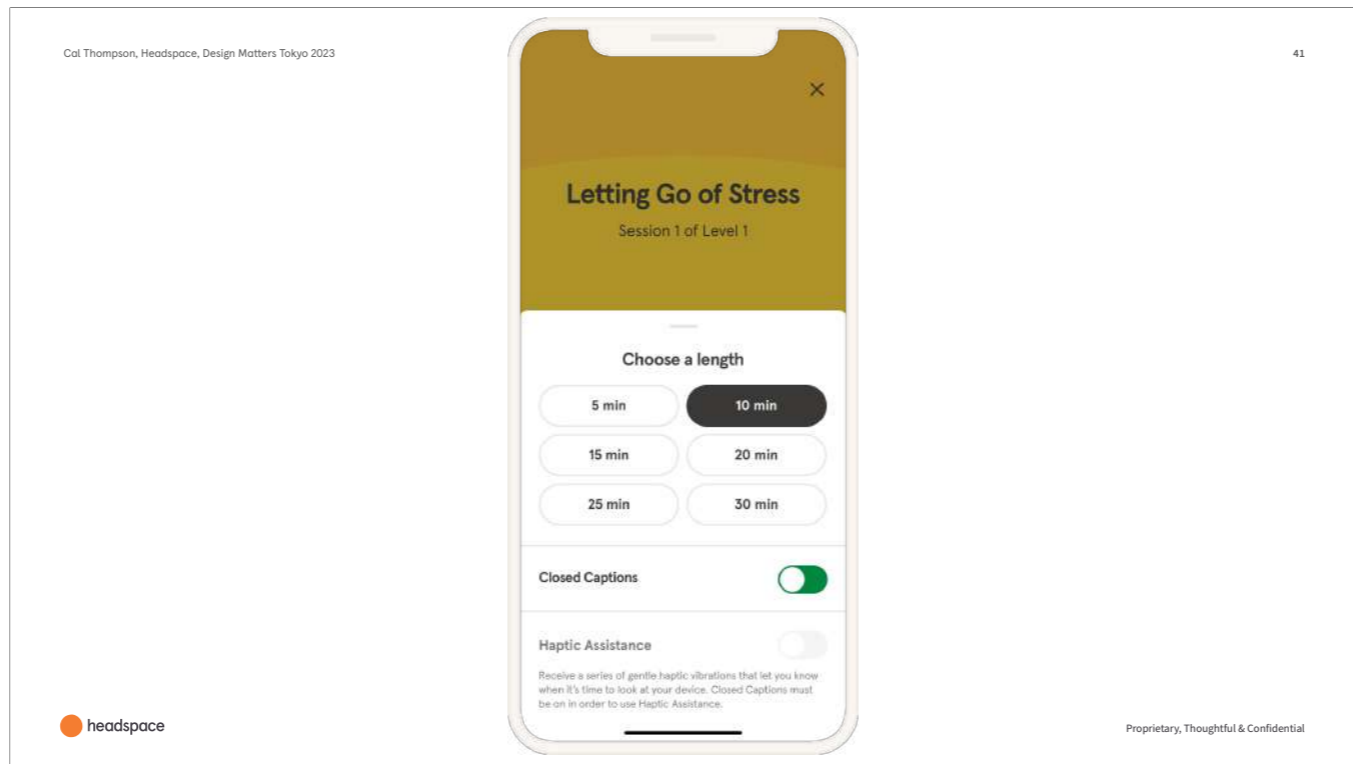


1.
We can design all of our service touchpoints and interactions to be deliberately inclusive and approachable for a wide-range of abilities and lived experiences.



“A good service is usable by everyone, equally. The service must be usable by everyone who needs to use it, regardless of their circumstances or abilities. No one should be less able to use the service than anyone else.”

Good Services: How to design services that work, by Lou Downe



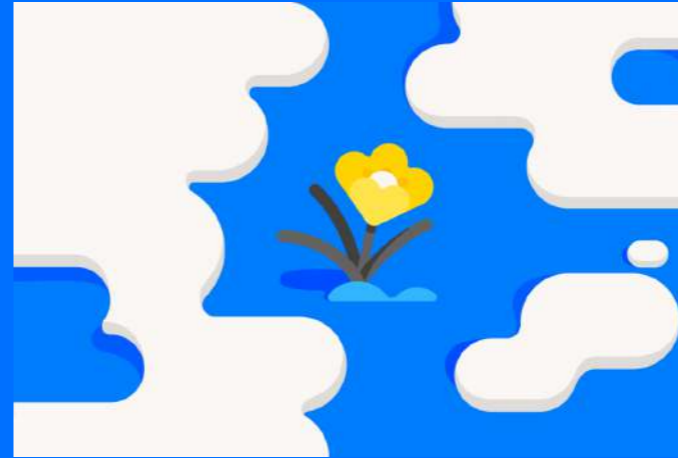
- Here's an example of when Headspace re-designed to be more usable and accessible and follow WCAG AA 2.0 standards, including haptic feedback, closed captions, better text scaling. We already had different lengths of mindful activities in order to accommodate beginners to experts.

At Headspace, we write at a 5th grade reading level and we simplify complex topics into metaphors, to ensure everyone can understand the mindfulness and mental health education we provide.

- Here's another way you can approach it.

2.

We can design and create thoughtful and deliberate experiences that give people more attention and present moment awareness, vs. take it away.



Do not aim to ‘snag’ or ‘hook,’ the user’s attention. Only employ necessary reminders, not petty notifications.

Explore copy tones that care for the user/member/customer.



Whoops! Something's changed

Before continuing about your day, enjoy a deep breath on us.
Ready? Big inhale. And exhale.

BACK TO HOME

GET SOME HEADSPACE

SUBSCRIBE



OUR COMMUNITY

BLOG

SUPPORT

HELP CENTER

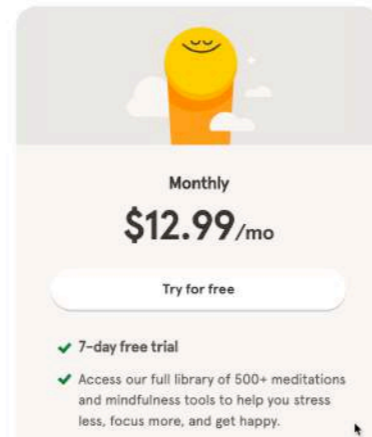
GET THE APP



Weave social impact into your business model.

Find the best Headspace plan for you

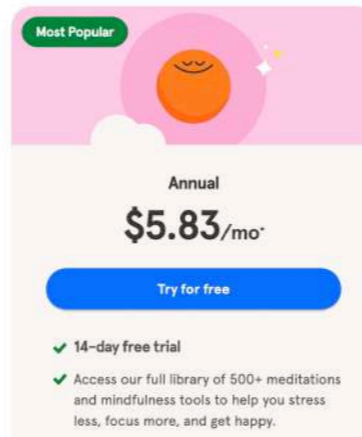
Basic plans Specialty plans



Monthly
\$12.99/mo

Try for free

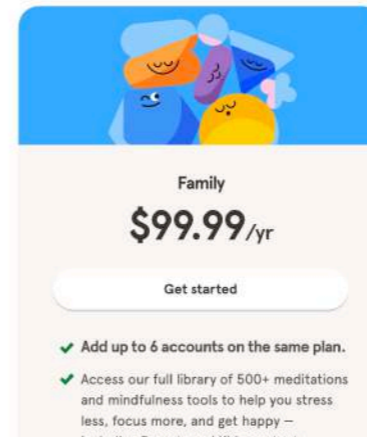
- ✓ 7-day free trial
- ✓ Access our full library of 500+ meditations and mindfulness tools to help you stress less, focus more, and get happy.



Most Popular
Annual
\$5.83/mo*

Try for free

- ✓ 14-day free trial
- ✓ Access our full library of 500+ meditations and mindfulness tools to help you stress less, focus more, and get happy.



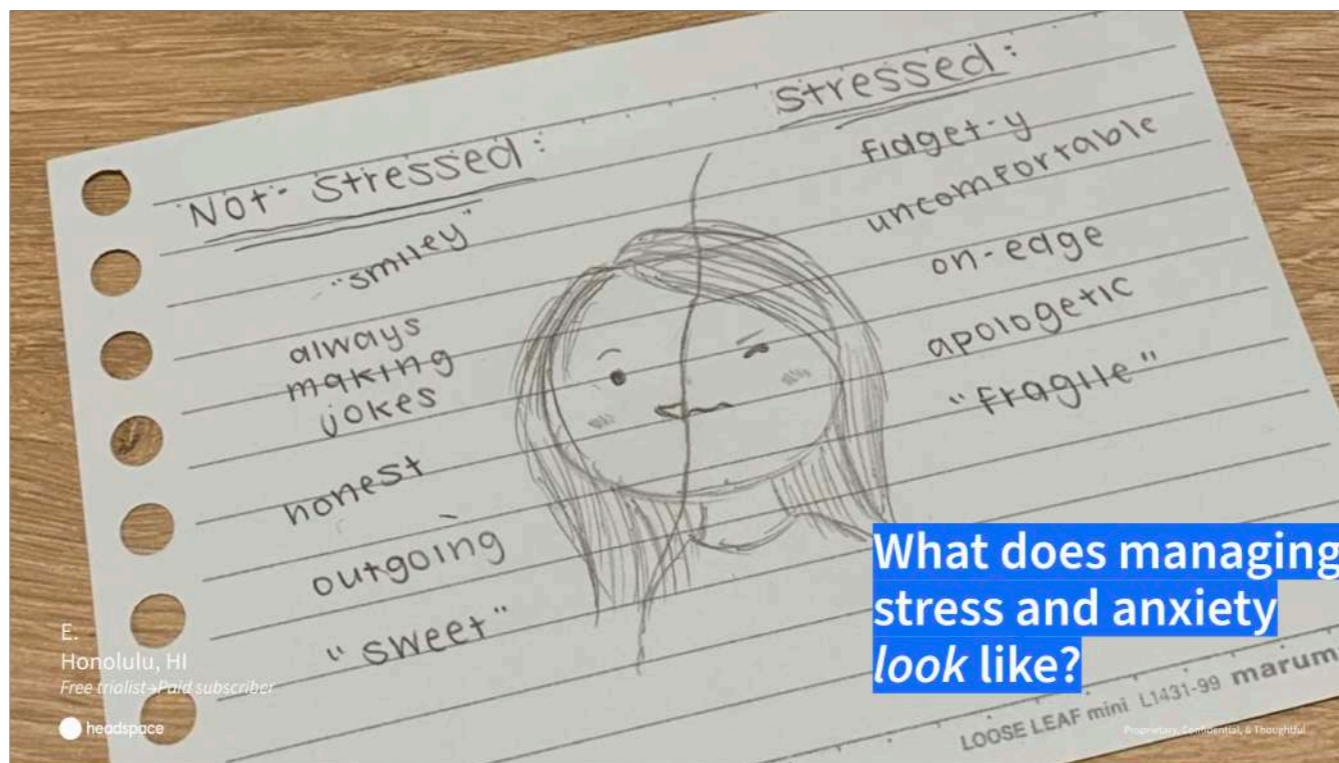
Family
\$99.99/yr

Get started

- ✓ Add up to 6 accounts on the same plan.
- ✓ Access our full library of 500+ meditations and mindfulness tools to help you stress less, focus more, and get happy – includes Parent and Kid content

3.
We can understand
people's emotional
states and help them
navigate through them.





- This was a diary study that I did- you can ask people to draw their feelings for you, giving them prompts. So they can express themselves, and inspire the work.

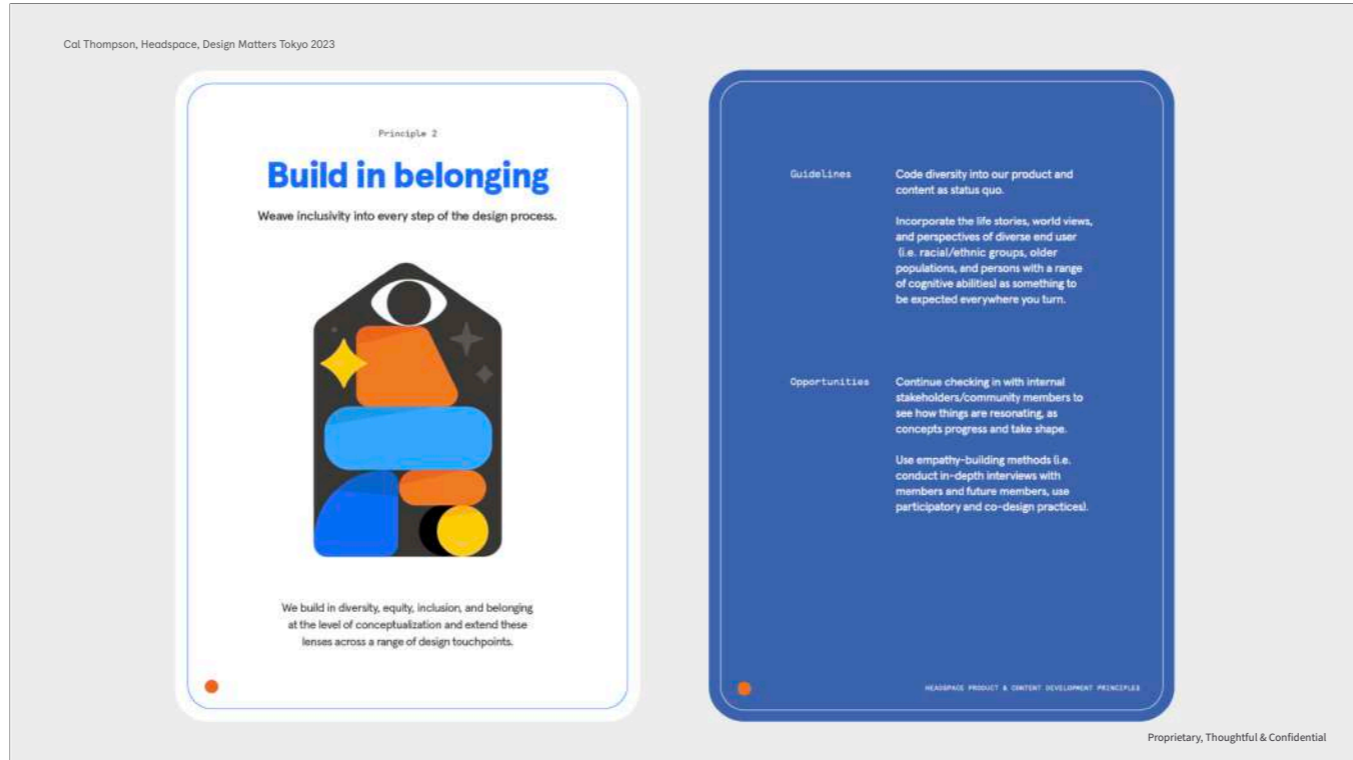
Induce hope. At Headspace we aim to be a light at the end of the tunnel, since some come to us in struggle.

Use playfulness, where appropriate, to warm up and care for people in tough situations.



Representation matters. Recognize that diverse lived experiences sometimes need different solutions. Specifics are important.

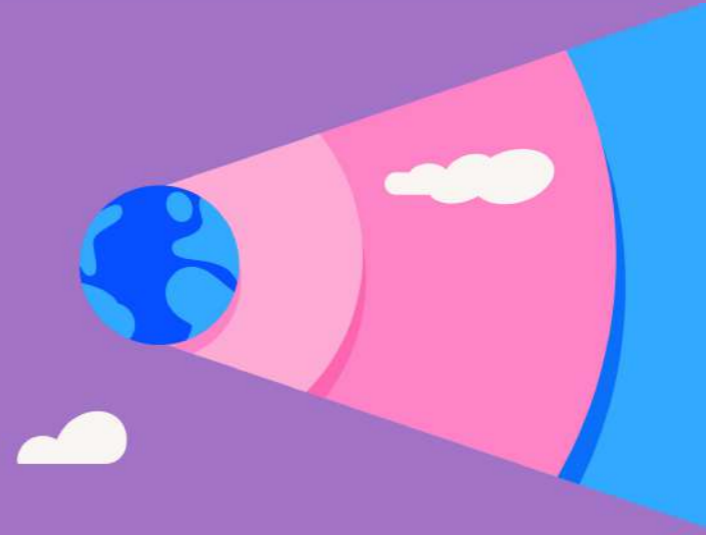
Co-designing with different user types and partnering with organizations can break you out of your assumptions.



- These are cards we made for our designers with our 7 Diversity Equity Inclusion and Belonging principles for how we design. Dr. Wizdom Powell, our Chief Social Impact and Diversity Officer led the work creating these principles and I worked with her to get them made into cards for the creative team to have on their desks.

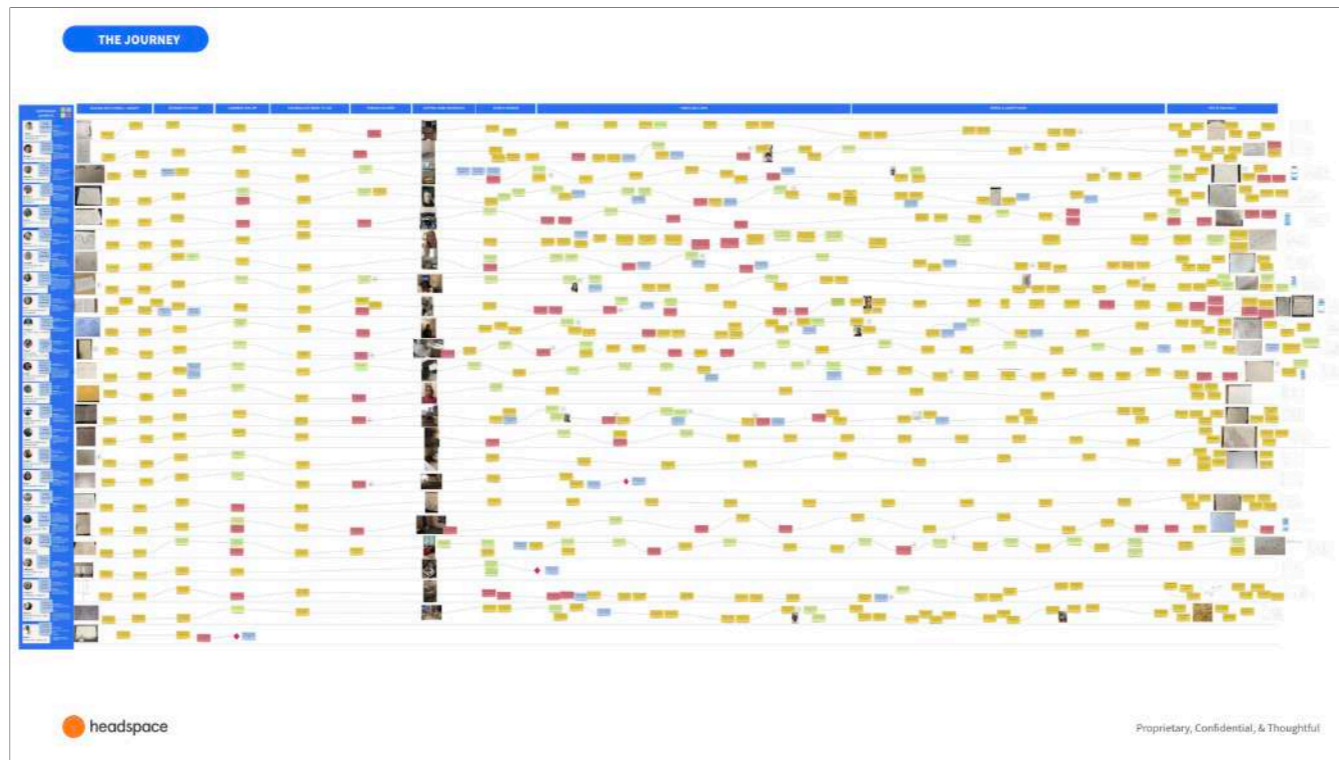
4.
We can design to
deliver people
along real, human
journeys-

Designing for both
time and change.

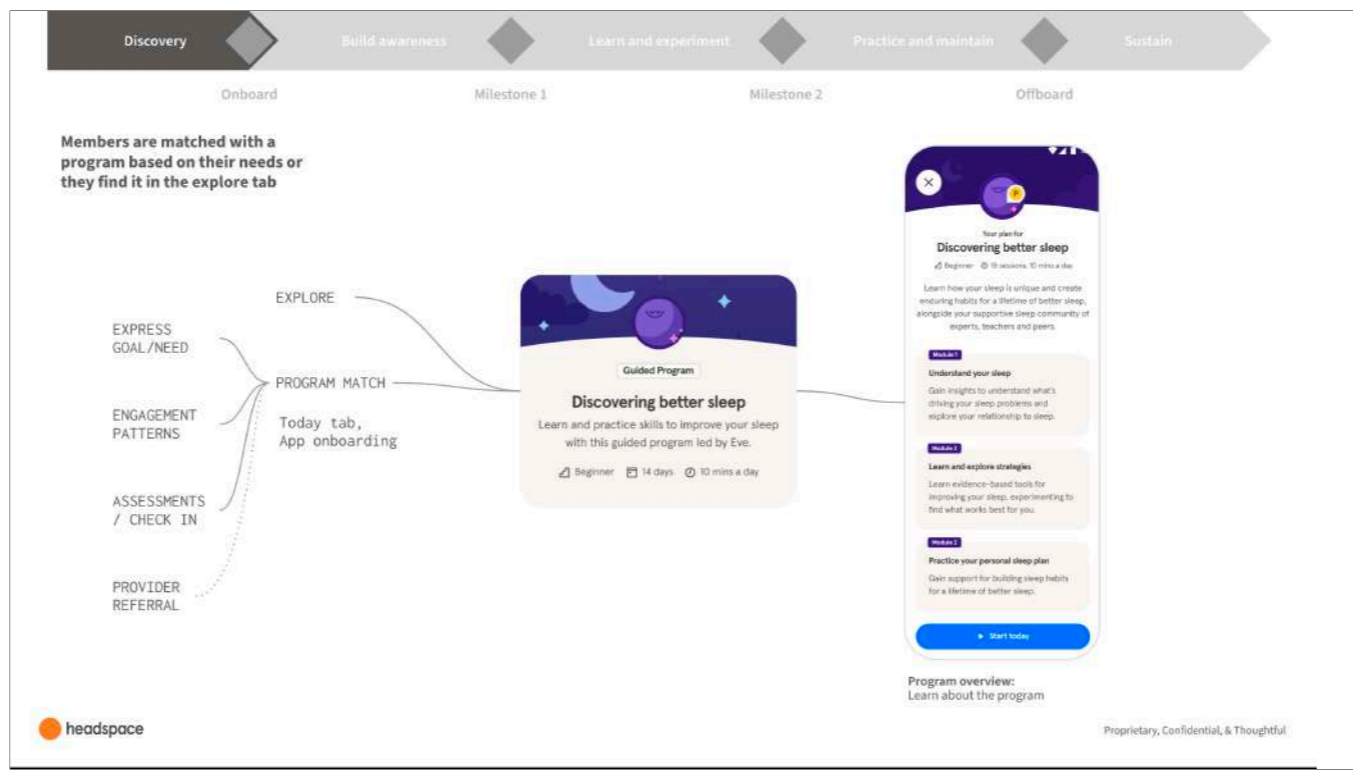




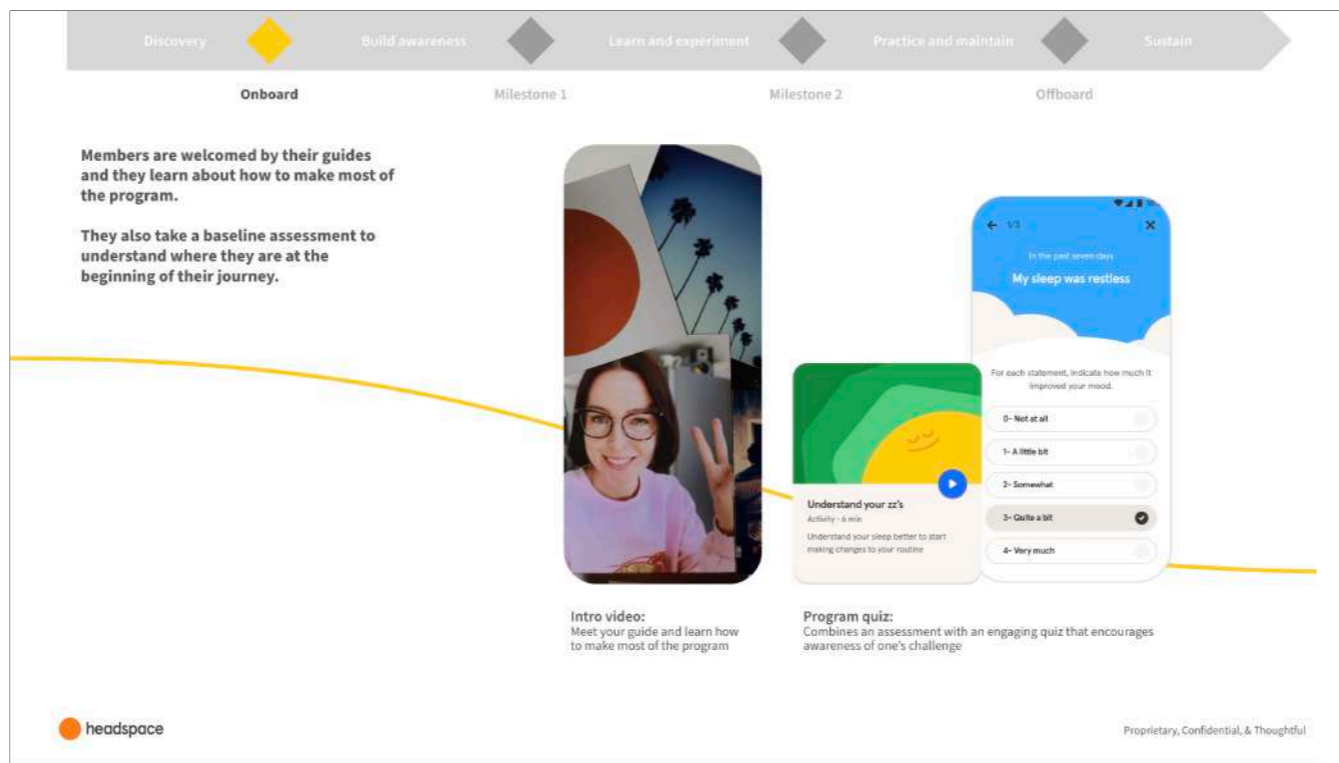
- So you can study how people feel, and study where they feel that (this is where a user has made a place in her mom for using our app), and you can study their long term journeys of life...



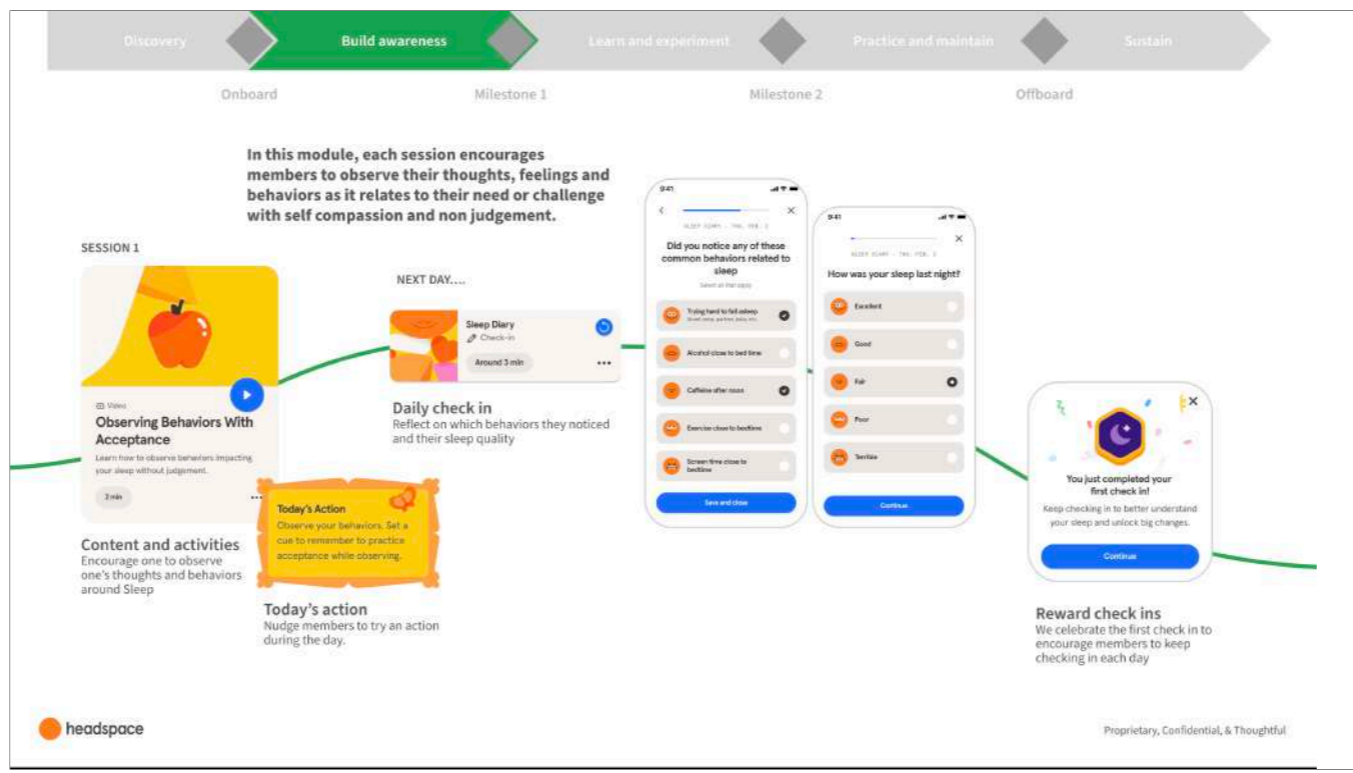
- This was 25 people who we studied for their first 30 days of using Headspace.



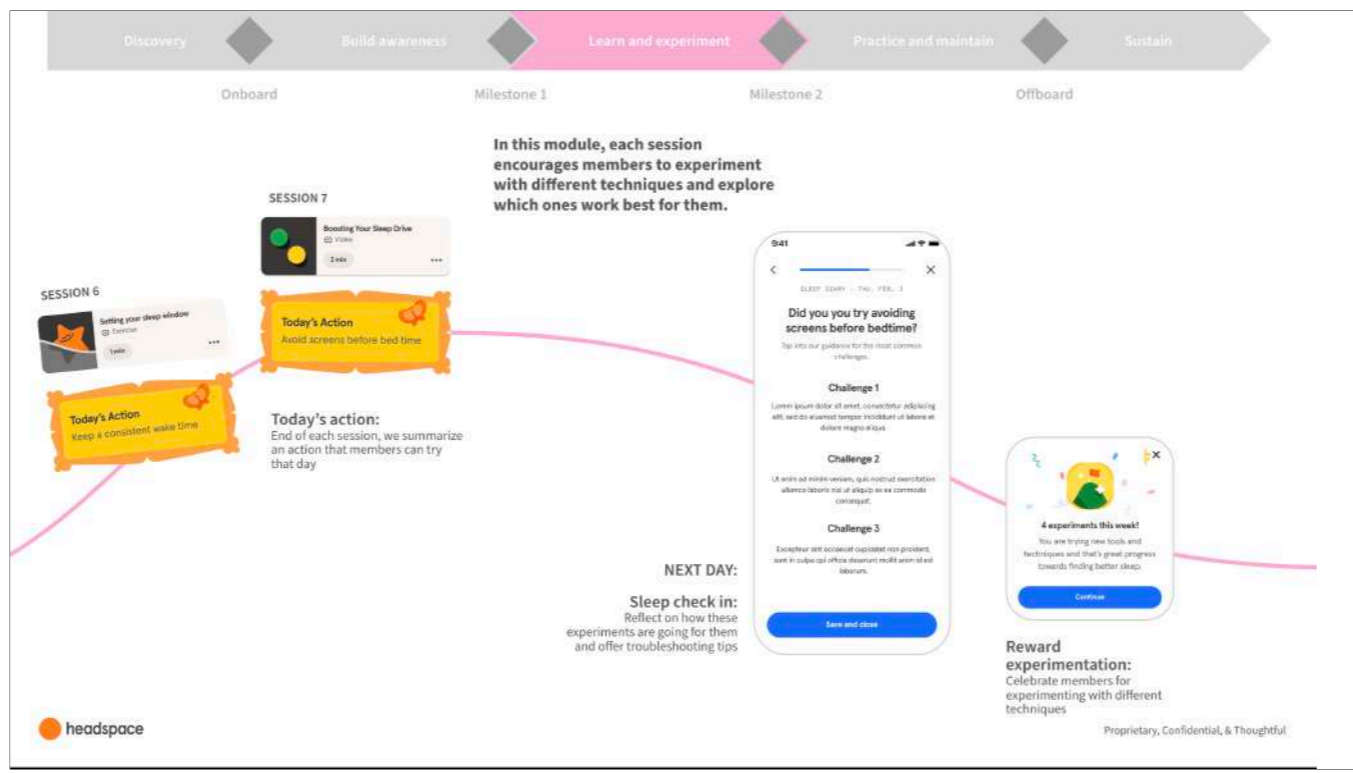
- Then you can use mindfully made digital experiences to actually create real health changes in people.
- This is our Sleep program.



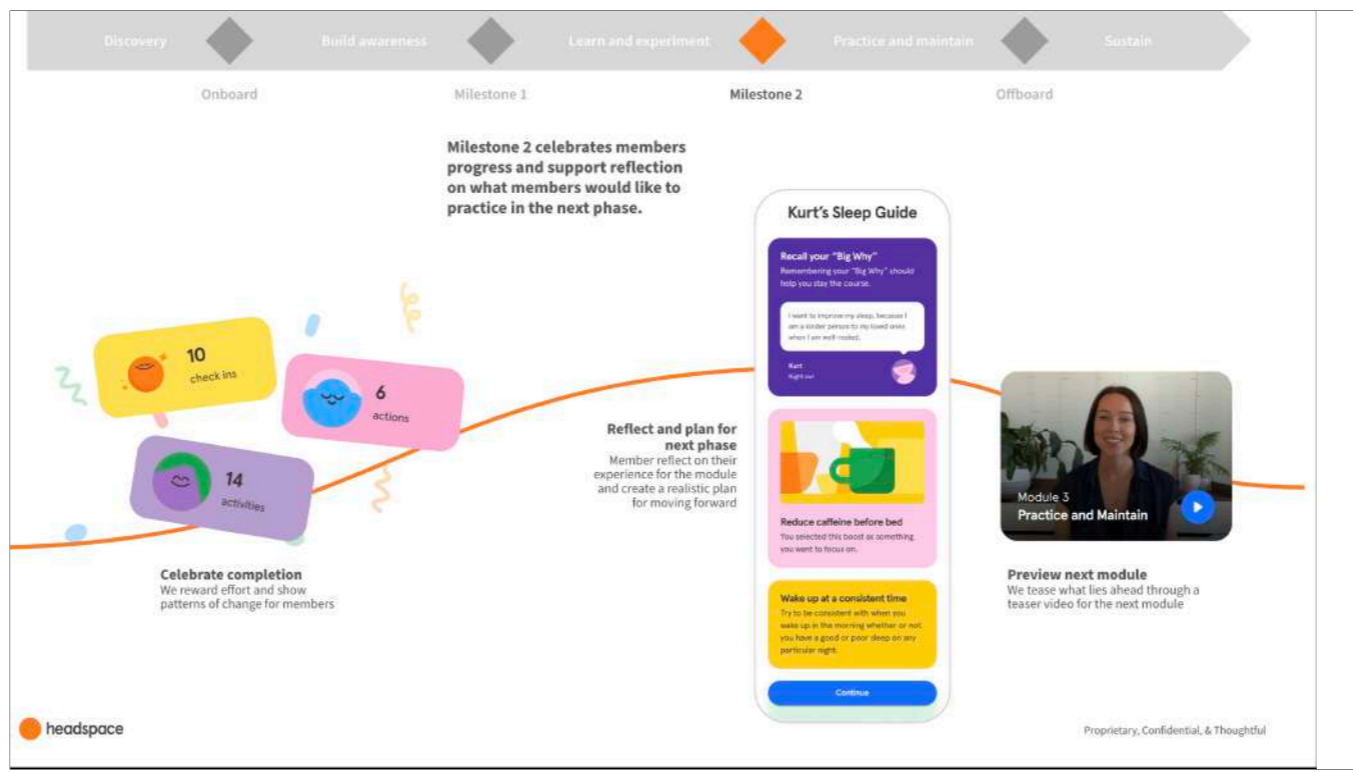
- It's a fun program, on purpose, that takes you through a multi week journey of improving your sleep



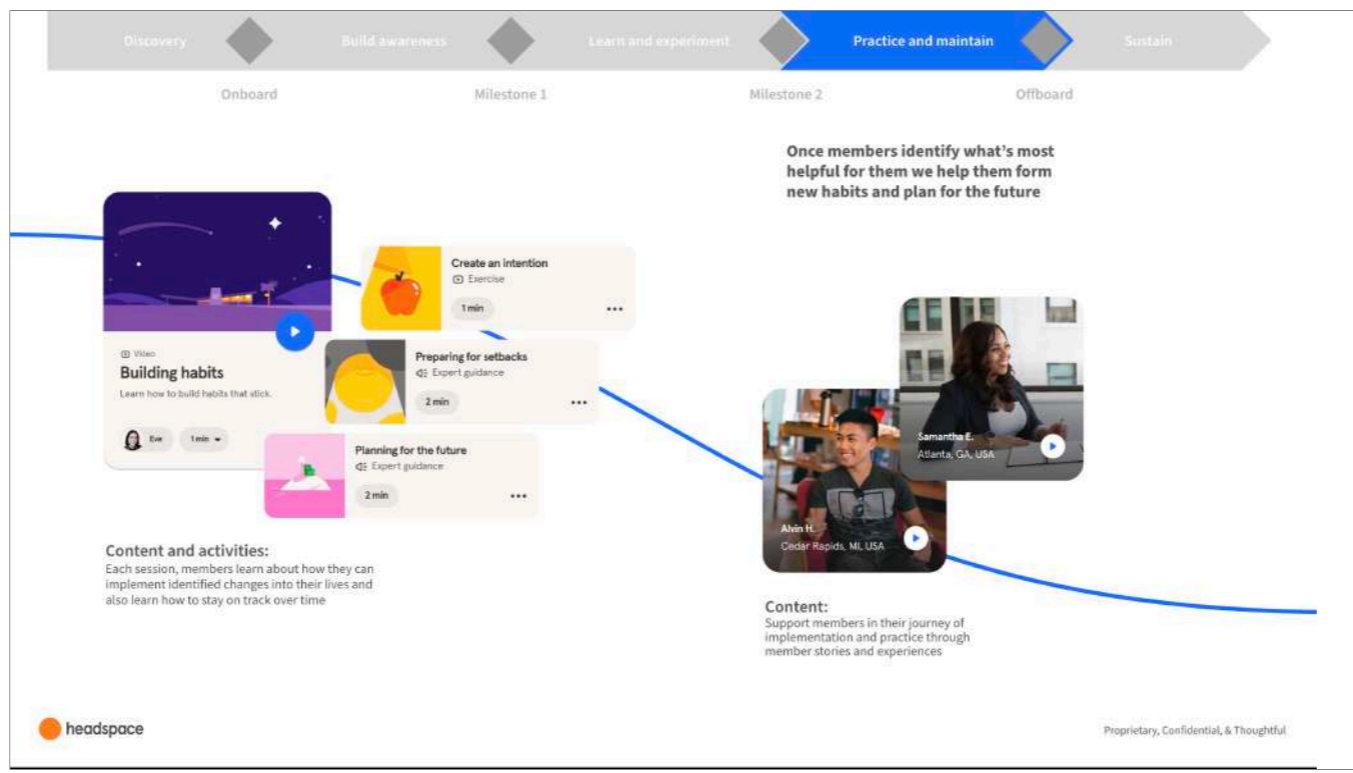
- Our designers take people through daily activities, check ins, reflections, and rewards...



- To help people understand what their particular sleep issues are, and give them tools to try, in a very low pressure experiment sort of way, to evolve and adapt their behaviors, to improve their sleep.



- Because it can be hard to change behaviors, people need encouragement, and senses of accomplishment, so little reward moments and cheering are built into the program, as well as reflections about “your Big Why” to motivate you by being anchored to what matters to you, to help you have more inner power to change your behaviors.



- Over time, the program helps people not just make small changes, but also put them into practice as habits over time, as routines.
- Part of this is about gaining awareness and repeating behaviors and activities that work. And changing things that are not working for getting sleep (phone 30 minutes before bedtime, caffeine too close to bed, etc).
- Part of behavior change is also planning for the future, and expanding one's sense of time so you don't feel so catastrophic about any issues you are having now- reflecting on the past can make you more aware of what has worked and not worked, and planning for the future also has been proven to increase someone's likelihood of doing a behavior they want to do.

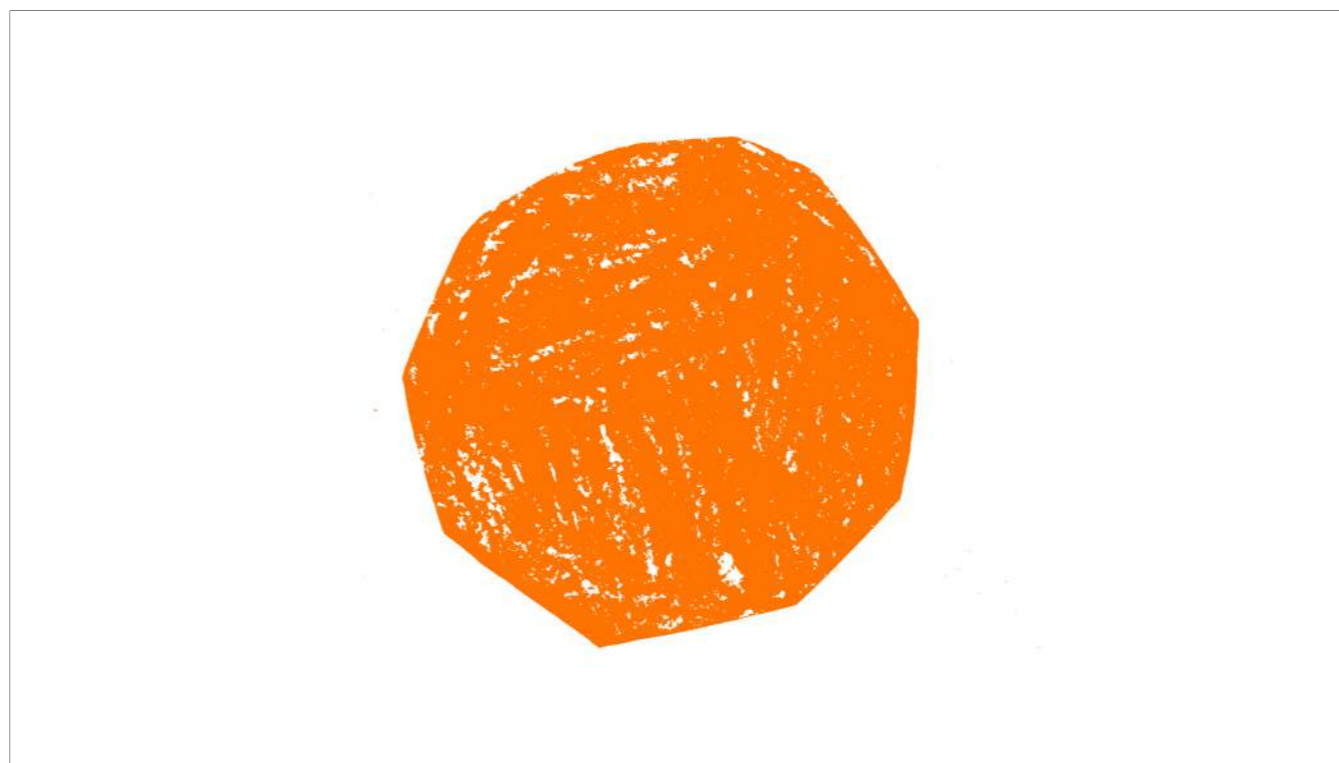
**Ok now a tiny
bit of behind
the scenes!**

**How the team
works →**



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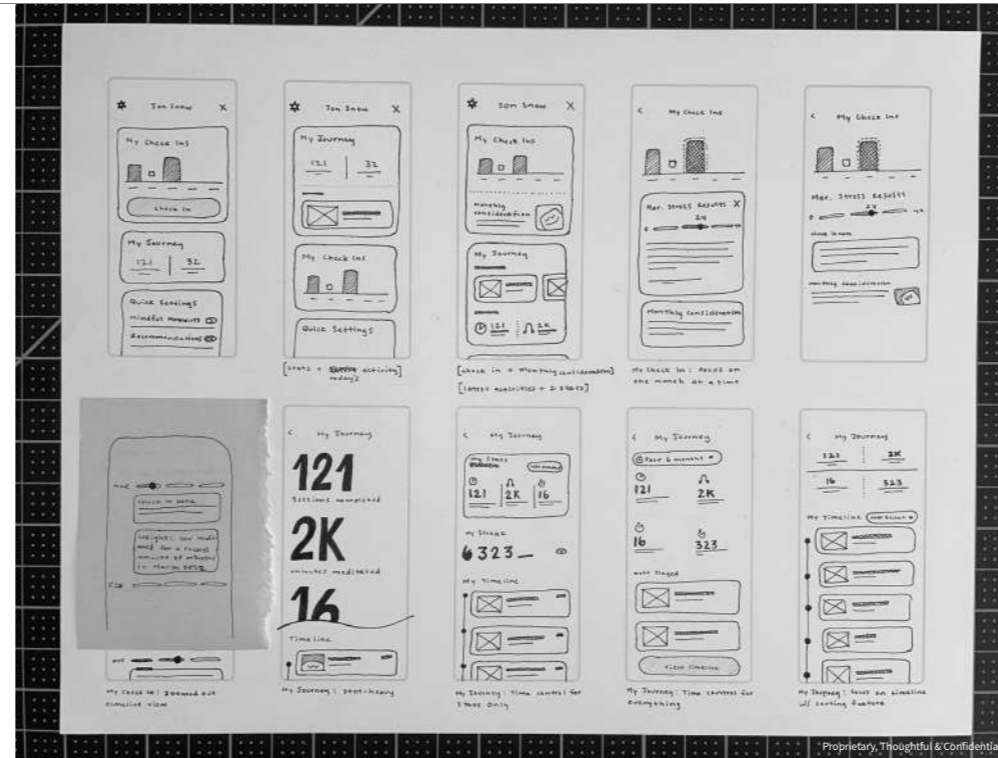


Terrell Griffith

Lead Product Designer
Headspace mobile app
Profile update explorations

How Terrell designs mindfully:
He designs for accessibility with text-scaling, landscape mode, haptic feedback, closed captions, and use of screen readers all possible.

He worked for months getting the Headspace app to WCAG AA 2.0 compliant, which made the app accessible to more types of people with different levels of vision and hearing.



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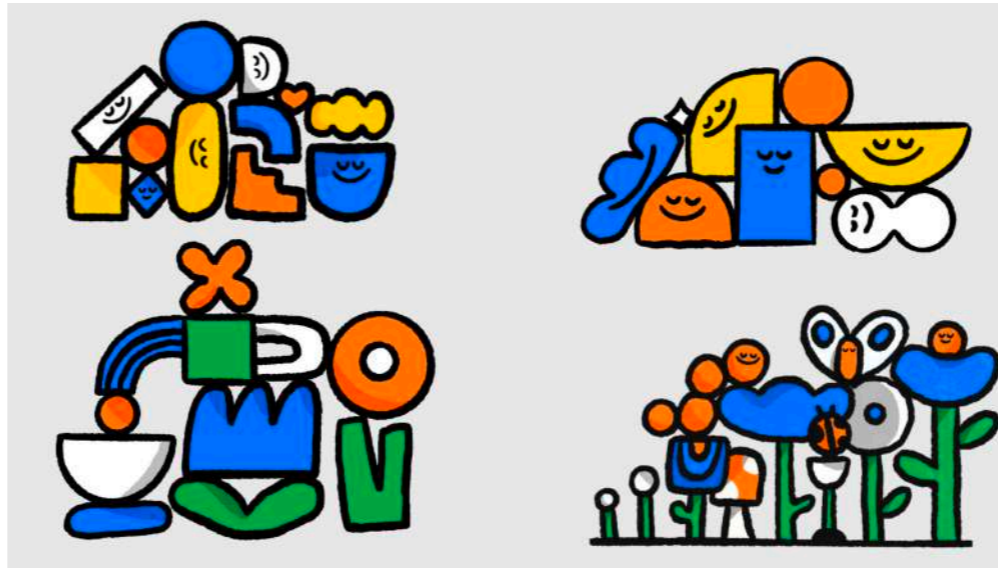


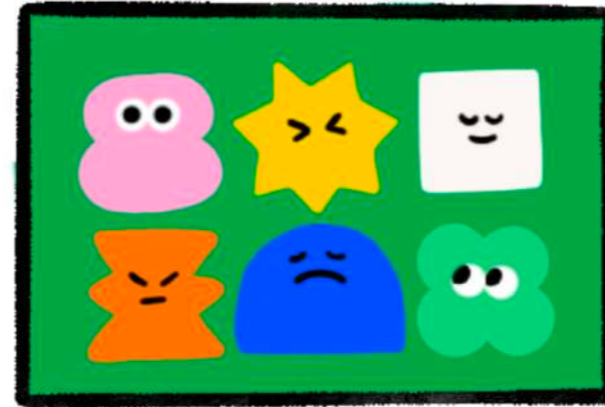
Karen Hong

Sr. Illustrator
Content artwork sketches

How Karen designs mindfully:
She brings her personality and thoughtfulness into her work.

Characters have energy, feel alive, and give the viewer a lift in their emotions.





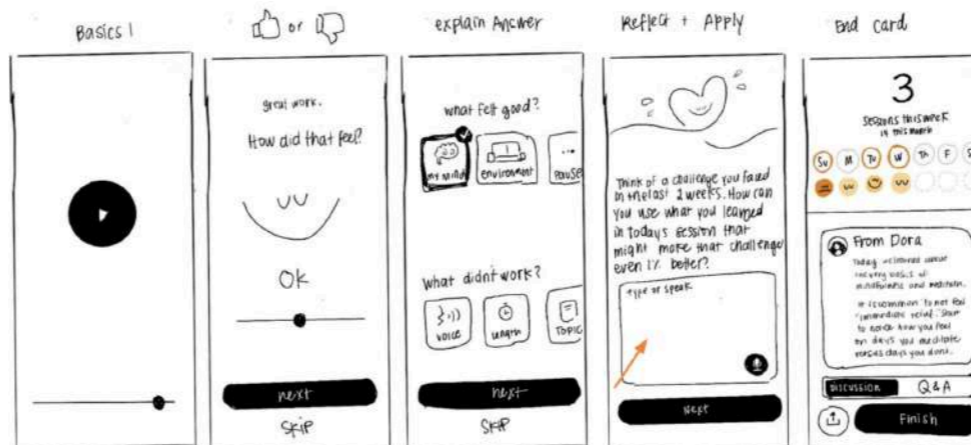


Stephanie Nakamae

Lead Product Designer
Post Activity Reflections sketches

How Stephanie designs mindfully:

She thinks through all the edge cases and possible ways a user might use the feature. She studies other apps for patterns that are user-friendly, supportive, or delightful. She carries values of inclusion and thinks through how her designs can be empathetic.



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**A parting gift:
Headspace's 3 Netflix
shows have been translated
into Japanese [{link}](#)**

Thank you!

